7: Thompson--377 [2] J-4 (no date) 1937 Laotians
116, 871, 177.87 France
636.87

"Much too small a sum has been allotted to education in the Laotian budget. Even elementary instruction is confined to the chief towns of the country and to the inadequate pagoda schools. Following the success of utilizing the Khmer bonzes as intermediaries, the French tried a similar policy in Laos with much less good fortune. To begin with, it gave the monopoly of education to the bonzes in a country not by any means wholly Buddhistic. The result has been that the mountain peoples remain quite illiterate. The French, in their love of simplification and uniformity, enjoy giving to a formula, which happened to succeed under one set of circumstances, an unjustifiably universal significance. As elsewhere in Indo-China, Laos has suffered from the assimilationist tendency to train natives for menial government service, as clerks and interpreters, by means of a French programme of studies that uproots its Asiatic victims spiritually from their setting. Only in Laos, through negligence or indifference on the part of both French and Laotians, this occurred much later. In 1928, however, Pasquier, on a tour in Laos, was horrified to hear a teacher expounding to his youthful pupils such irrelevant material as the French Wars of Religion."

10: d'Orleans--321-322 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 153, 609, 793, 871

"At first, we received several visits from an aged bonze, also occupying an important position, who had been for many years friendly to the French. 'They are fathers and brothers to me,' he would say. During the second half of our visit, he had been [322] seized with a wasting illness, and we frequently went to see him. One of the interpreters of the Consulate was teaching his pupils French, and they struck me as being very intelligent, while their lessons were well done."

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In résumé, Buddhist morality is based on the five following commandments, which are obligatory for all men without distinction:

1. Do not take the life of any living being;
2. Do not steal the property of others;
3. Do not commit adultery;
4. Never lie;
5. Do not get drunk on fermented beverages.

It should be noted that these five commandments give rise only to prohibitions, a fact which would seem to indicate that man is mainly inclined toward evil. This is the characteristic feature of Buddhist law; it forbids evil without indicating the means of doing good; it does not uplift the individual morally, but limits itself to preventing him from falling still lower. It acts to preserve a certain moral and social status in which the greater part of humanity is to be kept, under the domination of the bonzes who alone are capable of rising to a knowledge of good and evil.

Despite the purity of its morality and the elevation of its precepts, this religion, which denies progress but from which Christianity has nevertheless borrowed more than one dogma, has not yet been able, after twenty-five centuries of existence, to make civilization penetrate to its faithful.

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The Laotian clergy. The Buddhist clergy is composed of three categories of holy men, whom we call bonzes in Laos and talapoins (2) 871

(2) From the Siamese word Talapat, a bonze's fan made of palm leaves.

in Siam. These categories are:

1. Boys from ten to fifteen years of age who have entered a bonzery only to learn to read and write the Thai language, and who are called Xieng or Nèn;

2. Student bonzes, called Hatit, who complete their religious education until they reach the age of twenty-two or twenty-five by the study of Youn characters and of Pali, as well as by reading the sacred books;

[161] 3. Last the ordained bonzes or Phra (Phâ, in the current pronunciation) who have pronounced their temporary vows.

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There is a well-defined hierarchy among the bonzes which, in terms equivalent to our own, goes from the archbishop to the simple

149: Reinach--124 G-8 (no date) 1901 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

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Although less pure than in Cambodia, the bonzes' morals in Laos are generally fairly good. They are, moreover, greatly loved, highly regarded and fondly cherished. When there is a celebration or a great feast in a family, part of the choicest dishes is always reserved for the bonzes.

On the next to the last day of every phase of the moon, the bonzes must make public confession of their faults and be prepared, should the need arise, to undergo the punishments which the code stipulates.

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Bonzeries are schools and at the same time workshops where all trades are taught. All knowledge is concentrated in them, as our knowledge was during the Middle Ages in monasteries.

Together with the pagodas, they are also spots of inviolable asylum in accordance with certain rights, and hostelries where travelers are lodged and fed with the produce of the bonzes' alms-seeking.

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Newly ordained bonzes must stay in the pagoda at least three months, and may quit their habit at the end of this period. If a bonze desires to return to the pagoda after he has reentered lay life, his reassumption of the habit gives rise to the same formalities and ceremonies as the first time. It is a new ordination.

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The liturgical litanies of the Buddhist religion, which the bonzes psalmodize, may not be translated into Laotian. The bonzes and the [165] [Illustration] [166] [Blank page] [167] Laotian faithful, as well as the cantors and the French adepts, chant prayers whose meaning they do not understand (1).

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(1) In reality the Laotian, Lu and Youn bonzes form a sort of caste as the Druids used to in Gaul. More particularly, they are the ministers of worship, the repositories of moral authority, of scientific traditions, of secrets and of artistic and industrial methods. They transmit by word of mouth the precepts of Buddhist dogma, which were long ago explained by those who introduced the religion into the land. But the writings in "Pali" which contained these, although they can still be read mechanically by a few scholars, are no longer understood. Thence arises the necessity of handing down their meaning by word alone. Thence also, without doubt, arises the increasingly greater attennation of the purity and force of these principles as they

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Service of Posts and Telegraphs. Before 1900, Upper Laos paid Tonkin a yearly sum of 157,500 francs for the service of posts and telegraphs.

Lower Laos had an appropriation in its budget for wages, personnel housing, new construction, maintenance of lines, etc., and this rose to 165,295 francs in 1898.

Since 1900 the general budget has covered the service of posts and telegraphs in unified Laos. [279] [Illustration] [280] [Blank page]

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[281] Public education. An appropriation of 13,750 francs is written into the 1900 budget for public education. This is a negligible expense, yet the results achieved in the Franco-Laotian schools are satisfactory. The Superior Resident writes as follows:

"Primary schools in which the elements of the French language are taught to the natives are in operation at Luang-Prabang, Vien-Tiane, Khong and in all the province capitals. There students are given basic training by an interpreter who is appointed for the purpose and for whom a salary is appropriated. As soon as they can read and write fluently the most intelligent pupils are sent to the Collège Chasseloup-Laubat in Saigon, where they continue their studies for two or three years to perfect their knowledge. Under this system we shall shortly have a good body of interpreters for the administration and for private enterprise" (1).

(1) Le Laos français, op. cit. [Lieutenant-colonel Tournier (Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in Revue indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.]

Some students from the Laotian primary schools have even been sent to the Colonial School in Paris.

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Apostolic missions.

"The missionaries who endeavor to evangelize the peoples of Laos all belong to the French Foreign Missions Society [Missions Étrangères de France]. Some are attached to the bishop of Bangkok (2).

(2) Since 1900 the missions of Laos have been under the direction of a bishop of Laos, Msgr. Cuaz, whose temporary residence is at Nong-Sene, two kilometers to the north of Lakhone.

and these are the ones whom one meets on the banks of the Mekong.

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The Laotian Bonze--The Monastic Rules.

As in Ceylon, Cambodia and the other Buddhist countries, the Laotian who enters religious life does not make a perpetual vow. To become a bonze, all that is necessary is to be twenty years old, not to have killed, nor stolen, nor have any skin disease. When he is ordained, the young man agrees to observe the Buddhist rules which are: not to take life, not to steal, not to sin against virtue, not to lie, not to drink intoxicating liquors, not to eat outside of the prescribed hours, not to attend entertainments which excite the senses, not to touch gold, nor silver, etc.

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The bonze's head, chin and eyebrows are completely shaved. In principle he must shave twice a month. The garments of the bonze must not be made of one piece and their color must be yellow ochre or yellow. These two traditions have their origin in the history of the life of the Buddha. When he left the palace of his father, the Buddha cut his hair and exchanged his princely garments for those of a hunter. Now, the hunter was a poor man dressed in rags covered with the yellow ochre dust of the fields. Therefore, since that day, in memory of the first religious garments of the Buddha, tradition demands that all bonzes wear this costome. Texts are not agreed as [795] to the color, the Saddharma-smrtyupasthana sutra giving a whole list of colors for the dyeing of religious garments. We will not delay over the discussions which have arisen amongst the various Buddhist schools over [25] this problem. We will limit ourselves to stating that in central Asia and in Tibet the bonzes wear brownish-red garments instead of the beautiful yellow color of the Laotian and Cambodian togas.

Bonzes get up very early in the morning. Having made their toilet and said their prayers, they leave about seven o'clock in single file to beg for their food. To be precise, we should add that the containers for the alms are usually carried by student bonzes [bonzillons]. After returning to the pagoda they have a brief meal, then they teach [871] the student bonzes [bonzillons] to read and write, while others perform the manual tasks necessary to the upkeep of the monastery. About noon, the bonze has another meal which is the last of the day. He does not eat any food till the following morning. After the meal he [264] must wash his fingers (he eats only with his right hand), and rinse out his mouth. Then he has a siesta, and at the close of the afternoon he works at his tasks as in the morning. In principle he must never go out alone; he is always accompanied by a brother monk to protect him from any temptation.